



# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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## **Digging Begins at Hazardous Hanford Burial Ground**

*River Corridor Contractor Spent Two Years Preparing to Remediate 618-10*

RICHLAND, WASH. — After careful preparation and characterization, the Department of Energy's (DOE) River Corridor contractor, Washington Closure Hanford, has begun remediation of one of the most hazardous burial grounds tackled to date on the Hanford Site's River Corridor.

The \$57 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project began with nearly two years of preparation and characterization before reaching their current phase of work -- digging into 618-10 Burial Ground's trenches.

"This burial ground poses some unique challenges and is on the critical path to completing River Corridor Cleanup by 2015," said Mark French, DOE's Federal Project Director for the River Corridor. "Funding provided by the Recovery Act allowed us to accelerate the start of this project."

"So far, we've removed about 30 drums that contain radioactively contaminated shavings and oil, and miscellaneous debris," said John Darby, the 618-10 Burial Ground operations manager for Washington Closure.

About 30 concrete-lined drums have also been unearthed. Concreted drums were typically used to dispose of radioactive liquids. Workers have also found around 200 bottles containing liquids, which will have to be evaluated and treated prior to disposal.

"We expect to find up to 2,000 drums containing everything from mildly contaminated clothing and debris to highly radioactive laboratory equipment and liquids," said Darby.

In addition to the trenches, the six-acre site contains 94 vertical pipe units (VPUs). The VPUs consist of five bottomless 55-gallon drums welded together into which workers dumped highly radioactive wastes.

The VPUs were buried upright in the ground. They are expected to contain the site's most radioactive waste. Planning is under way for safely removing the VPUs and their contents.

Darby said it will take about 18 months to complete excavation of the trenches and load out the debris. Most of the waste removed from the site will be transported to Hanford's Environmental Restoration Disposal Facility for disposal.

The 618-10 Burial Ground is located about six miles north of the city of Richland and a few hundred yards from the Hanford Site's main highway. It is also located about four miles west of the Columbia River.

The burial ground was opened in March 1954 and accepted waste until it closed in September 1963.

Disposal records from the 1950s and 1960s are incomplete, but the burial ground is thought to contain radiologically contaminated laboratory instruments, bottles, boxes, filters, aluminum cuttings, irradiated fuel element samples, metallurgical samples, electrical equipment, lighting fixtures, barrels, laboratory equipment and hoods, and high-dose-rate wastes in shielded, or concreted, drums.

Washington Closure manages the \$2.3 billion River Corridor Closure Project, known as the largest environmental cleanup closure project in the nation, for the DOE Richland Operations Office.

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